The Clarion Call

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Newsletter of the Department of Massachusetts

From The Department Commander

Brothers,

First, thank you for the honor of electing me as your Department Commander. I look forward to working with you over the coming year and growing and improving our order. I have enjoyed my years of membership in the SUVCW and ask you to please let me know if you have any ideas for improving the Department and the Order.

As you read in Department Order No. 3, I have established two new awards for recruiting. I challenge every Brother and every Camp do be more aggressive in recruitment and specifically ask every member to recruit one new Brother in the next year. I believe that every Brother recruiting one new member is an achievable goal, and if we do so, we would double the size of our Department.

One of our three core values is Fraternity. I believe this to be core to what we do and something that will help us recruit and retain new members. We practice Fraternity when we attend Camp meetings and interact with our Camp Brothers. Brothers in one Camp told me that they meet for supper at a small restaurant before the Camp meeting and all of the Brothers in the Camp are invited to join them. Each meeting, they may get a different mix showing up for Supper, but it helps bring everyone together.

We practice Fraternity when we show up to events such as headstone dedications memorial services or flagging a cemetery for Memorial Day. These events allow us to engage with Brothers from our Camp and other Camps and build friendships with our fellow Brothers that will last for years. We practice

Fraternity when we attend Department Encampment and meet Brothers from other Camps and engage in planning and budgeting for the next year. We practice Fraternity when we attend National events such as the National Encampment or the Annual Remembrance Day trip to Gettysburg. Through these events, I have made close personal friendships with Brothers from all over the country. And we practice Fraternity, whenever we help another Brother.

As we move ahead in this busy year, please attend more events, engage more in Fraternity with your fellow Brothers of the Order and please bring in at least one new member.

Let's all work together to grow and improve this order for future generations.

In Fraternity, Charity, and Loyalty,

Rod

Willie Grout Camp #25 Grave Dedication for Pvt. Coonan

On May 18th, Camp #25 conducted a grave dedication ceremony for Private Daniel J. Coonan at St. John's Cemetery in Worcester, MA. This dedication was first proposed by a descendant of Private Coonan who also attended. While a family stone was present there was no stone to honor his service with the 21st Massachusetts Infantry until the descendant worked through the process. Camp #25's ceremony was led by Commander Matthew Sargent.

Memorial Day Observance at the Massachusetts National Cemetery

On May 26, 2024, the First Military District, Sons of Veterans Reserve participated in the annual Memorial Day observance at the Massachusetts National Cemetery in Bourne. The 1st Military District, SVR marched in the parade, and Department of Massachusetts Commander Rodrick Fraser read Logan's Order No. 11, inaugurating "Decoration Day, (now Memorial Day). The official ceremony concluded with a wreath salute at the cemetery's Veterans Memorial, followed by a rifle salute and playing of "Taps". Department of Massachusetts members in attendance then offered a commemoration at each of the gravesites of the unknown soldiers of the civil war buried at the cemetery.

Grave Rededication for Pvt. Hugh Cook at Goose Hill Cemetery

Willie Grout Camp #25 in conjunction with the 1st Military District, Sons of Veterans Reserve held a grave rededication for Hugh Cook at Goose Hill Cemetery in Rutland, MA on June 8. Cook died in 1904 trying to save his pension record from a house fire. Brothers from Camps 5, 22, 25, 54 and 104 participated including Commander Rod Fraser. Around a dozen Rutland residents participated some from Rutland Historical Society who provided a reception afterward.

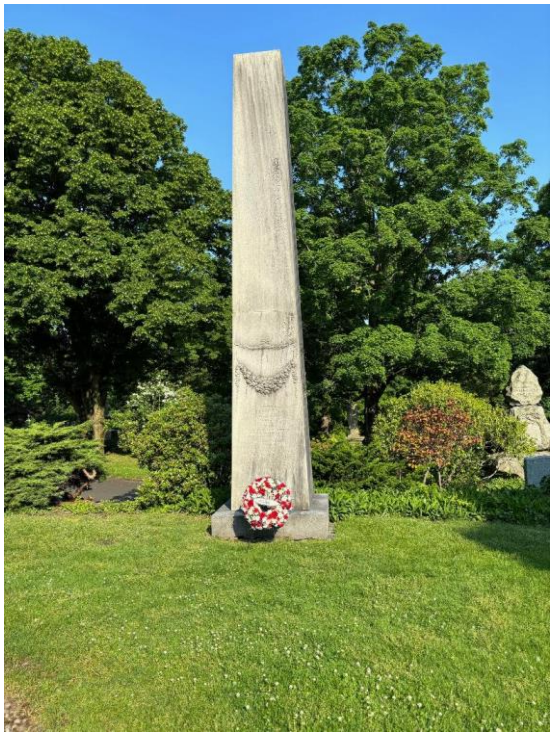
According to Col Augustus van Horne Ellis Camp #124 of the Department of New York, the project was started when their PCC William Stump came across the story of Hugh Cook's sad fate while searching local newspapers for Union soldiers mentioned. Thanks to the assistance of the Rutland Historical Society and the Rutland Highway Department, PCC Stump was able to secure a headstone for Pvt Cook's unmarked grave.

Cook served in Company F of the 40th Massachusetts between August 9, 1862, and August 11, 1864. And then Company H 20th Regiment Veterans Reserve Corps from August 11, 1864, until July 11, 1865. In 1904, at the age of 77, a fire broke out at his home in Rutland. Desperate to secure his pension paperwork he entered the burning house and while trying to escape his clothing snagged on a window and he tragically burned alive. His sad fate was a national news story. Buried in a pauper's grave in Goose Hill Cemetery, he will now be remembered by Rutland as one of their veterans.

Department of Massachusetts Places Wreaths at Mount Auburn Cemetery

The Department of Massachusetts continued its tradition of placing two wreaths at Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge. The first wreath was placed at the Copenhagen Lot. This lot is famous for the statue of a winged angel with a trumpet placed in honor of a young woman of the family. The second wreath was placed at the cenotaph for the US Exploring Expedition on Central Avenue. The expedition explored the West coast of the United States in the mid-1840s before continuing on to Pacific Islands where two members were killed by natives. Two other members were lost at sea rounding Cape Horn.

The exact reasons why the Department of Massachusetts places wreaths at these two sites is seemingly lost to history. But it is a requirement of two endowments given to the Department years ago. The wreaths were placed on Memorial Day after the Bourne National Cemetery events. If any Brother has more information on these obligations, please forward the information to suvcwclarioncall@gmail.com so that the information can be published in a future issue of *The Clarion Call*.



L.A. Tifft Camp #15 Dedicates Two Headstones at Unmarked Graves

Brother Gene Theroux of L.A. Tifft Camp #15 who is also the Veterans Graves Officer for the City of Westfield discovered that two Civil War veterans were interred in Westfield's Pine Hill Cemetery in unmarked graves. These veterans included:

1. Lyman F. Hooker, 1Lt (1843-1910), 25th Infantry Regiment
2. David Benson Furber, Sergeant (1845-1945), U.S. Army Signal Corps

Brother Theroux retrieved the military service records and prepared the VA 40-1330s to request the government provide headstones from the Veterans Administration for both Lt. Hooker and Sgt. Furber. He coordinated with the cemetery, with the City of Westfield Veterans Service Officer to plan a formal ceremony, and with L.A. Tifft Camp 15. Once the two gravestones arrived, Brother Theroux's team of veterans (who were participating in the Veterans Real Estate Tax Exemption work off program) installed the two gravestones.

It's important to note that there are a total of three hundred fifteen Civil War veterans memorials at Pine Hill Cemetery. Many of whom were members of Westfield's Lyon Grand Army of the Republic Post 41 (both Lt. Lyman F. Hooker and Sgt, David B. Furber were members).

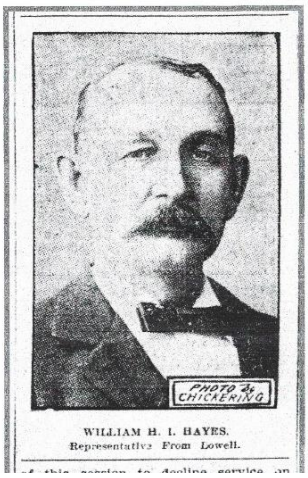
The first ceremony was held at the gravesite of 1Lt. Lyman F. Hooker at 10 AM followed by the ceremony at the gravesite of Sgt. David Benson Furber at 10;30 AM. A descendant of Sgt. Furber traveled from Cape Cod to attend the ceremony.

L.A. Tifft Camp #15 of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War conducted the Gravestone Dedication Service, and the American Legion Post 124 Firing Detail assisted by providing the volleys. There was excellent media coverage for the grave dedications which was covered by both WWLP channel 22 News and the Westfield News.

Forgotten Brother Rediscovered

While walking through the cemetery near my home, I noticed a nearly overgrown flat plate in the ground depicting a Masonic square and compass. Being a Freemason myself, I cleared away some of the overgrowth and saw other symbols including one for the GAR and the 9th Corps. There was no GAR flag holder or American flag. Sadly, I realized William Hayes' service in the Civil War was forgotten and unrecognized.

The 9th Corps is the one my Great-great grandfather Cyrus A. Pratt served in. I took the information from the monument and looked Bill Hayes up in Mass. Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines of the Civil War. He served in exactly the same regiment my ancestor did!



My last name is Hayes, too, and he served in my ancestor's regiment. Coincidence?

At age 14 William Henry Irving Hayes enlisted in the 6th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, 9 months service giving his age as 18. His obituary says he volunteered for the 100 days service while 13 but "was recalled." Still, he was given the nickname "Old Hundred" by his friends. He was born in Boston on 21 June 1848, was living in Groton and was a miller. He actually served the full nine months in Co. B and was mustered out 3 June 1863.

At age 15, Bill enlisted in the 56th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry on 16 December 1863 again giving his age as 18. He was assigned to Company B where he served until the regiment was mustered out 12 July 1865.

The 56th Regiment was the first to include mustered out veterans of earlier regiments. Thus, it was known as the First Veteran Regiment. Veterans required less time for training and were a pool of experienced men to aid in training new men such as my ancestor, Cyrus.

The 56th fought at the Wilderness, Spottsylvania, North Anna River, Cold Harbor and the first assault on Petersburg, including the infamous Crater explosion. It was further engaged at Weldon RR and Poplar Grove Church, all in 1864. The following spring it was part of

the final assault on Petersburg and was recorded in the Official Record as “and held on” to Battery 27 opposite Fort Sedgwick.

Bill Hayes served as Commander of Benjamin F. Butler GAR Post #42 and of the veterans’ organizations of the 6th and 56th Regiments. In 1877 he established a tobacco wholesale business and upon retiring in 1893 was elected state representative from Lowell, MA. Bill died in Lowell on 30 June 1907 and is buried in Edson Cemetery.

Bill’s monument now has a GAR holder, and U. S. Flag I placed there on the genuine Memorial Day of May 30th. I have added him to the Graves Registration project. Now, I need to contact the men to place the flags to see that “Old Hundred” Hayes is added to their list!

Bro. Don Hayes
Bay State Camp #61

Busy Time for General George L. Hartsuff Camp #50

On the Sunday of Memorial Day weekend, Camp #50 re-dedicated the grave site of founding member Frances Poole and also of PCC Dean Sargent, both of whom played prominent roles in Camp #50. The ceremony was a huge success, attended by town officials and descendants of the men.

Camp #50 participated in the celebration of the 150th Anniversary of Rockland. The Camp entered a float in the parade and several members rode along engaging the public and bringing attention to our cause. The public interaction allowed us to describe who we are, and what we do, and the feedback has been extremely positive.

On June 29th, Camp #50 supported a Civil War encampment and battle reenactment at our namesake park—Hartsuff Park—to bring attention to the history of our brave soldiers. Although shortened by the forecast of thunderstorms and lightning on Sunday, it was an amazing success and calls to do it again have already begun. Brothers from various Camps participated in the reenactment.

Mark Your Calendars

Gettysburg Remembrance Day is November 16, 2024. The Department's travel plans for Remembrance Day will be posted on the Department website as soon as the information becomes available.

Restoration Project of GAR Plot at Lakeside Cemetery

Camp Charles H. Bond #104 has long been supporting Wakefield's Lakeside Cemetery. For years, Brothers Bill Naughton, PDC, and Richard Nicol have worked tirelessly to locate and identify Civil War soldiers in the cemetery, and the Camp annually places American flags at these graves before every Memorial Day. In 2020, amid COVID, then Camp Commander John Wilder put together a project to expand the Camp's support of the cemetery. This plan had five targets:

1. Restore and repair all Grand Army of the Republic markers (70+) across the cemetery by removing the rust and giving them a fresh coat of paint that matches their original colors.

2. Coat all federal civil war headstones (50+) in D/2 to remove all biological growth from the stones and return them to their original bright white color

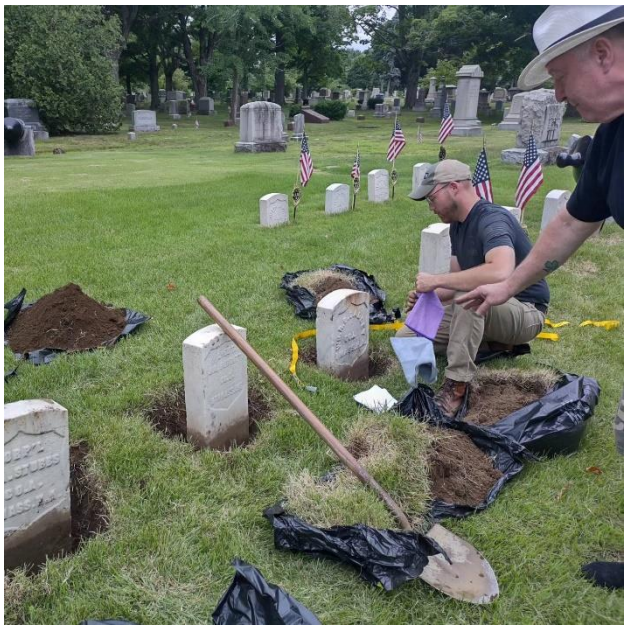
3. Restore the four M1840 Howitzers positioned at either corner of the Post 12 GAR cemetery plot by removing the rust and repainting each gun

4. Raise and reset all 14 of the headstones within the Post 12 GAR cemetery plot

5. Install a small stone monument commemorating Post 12 and the GAR, along with a flagpole to fly the American flag.

The Camp got to work quickly, coating all federal stones in D/2 and pulling up the GAR markers to be restored, with Brother Mark Turcheck singlehandedly taking on that task. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, the Camp had to put this project on pause due to a lack of a stable meeting location. After the Camp regained its footing in 2023 and moved to the Concord Armory, they could refocus their efforts on finishing this project.

In less than a year of this project being picked back up again, all restored GAR markers have been placed back at their original site, another coat of D/2 has gone on all the stones, three of the four are restored, and 10 of the 14 headstones in the plot are reset. Organized by Camp Commander Matthew Ahern, #104 has made four separate excursions to the plot with John Wilder, PCC, tackling the Howitzer restoration and Kevin Tucker, PDC, Logan Goodwin, and Matthew Ahern resting stones. While there is still work to be done, the Camp is inching closer to completion and will hopefully have the monument placed and flag flying by spring or summer of next year.



New *Clarion Call* Format and Submission Information

The Clarion Call is now published in PDF format and is available by email subscription and as a download from the Department website. To request a new email address be added to the subscription list, or to submit an article for the next issue, please contact the editor at suvcwclarioncall@gmail.com.

The Absolution at Gettysburg

One Hundred and sixty-one years ago, two great armies were marching toward the small Pennsylvania town of Gettysburg. The inhabitants of this small town numbered only 8,000 souls and they were going to be in the middle of one of the greatest battles of the United State Civil War.

From July 1st until July 3rd the Army of Northern Virginia with almost 72,000 men, commanded by General Robert E Lee and the Army of the Potomac with almost 92,000 men, Commanded by Generals George G Meade and John F Reynolds, battled it out on this field that left more than 7,800 dead, 27,000 wounded, and more than 11,000 captured or missing. The ground literally was red with the blood of both blue and gray.

Although this battle has gone down in history as one of, if not, the bloodiest battles in American history, there is one little known event that took place on July 2nd in the middle of the battle. Fr. William Corby, Chaplain of the 88th New York Infantry Regiment of the Irish Brigade, had been with his men since the start of the war. He was living at Notre Dame University when the war began and became chaplain of the Regiment serving until the end of war. What was remarkable about this is that the average service of a Chaplain was 18 months as most of them were in their 50's and could not adjust to the life in the field.

The role of the Chaplain in the Army at the time of the Civil War was unclear. They were appointed by the regimental commander after being elected by the field grade officers. They were paid at the rank of Captain of Calvary $100 per month and $18 for rations, a tent, and forage for one horse, which they had to provide for themselves. Chaplains in the Confederacy did not fare as well. Most of them did not get paid at all.

But the most extraordinary thing happened on the afternoon of July 2, 1863. The Irish Brigade was preparing to engage the enemy and Fr. Corby proposed to give the General Absolution to the men because, in his words, "the men had absolutely no chance to practice their religious duties during the past two or three weeks, being constantly on the march."

In his book, *Memoires of Chaplain Life*, Fr. Corby quotes Major General St. Clair Mulholland on his experience at this point:

> *There are yet a few minutes to spare before starting, and the time is occupied by one of the most impressive religious ceremonies I have ever witnessed. The Chaplain of the Irish Brigade, whose members were mostly Catholic, proposed to give a general absolution to all the men before going to fight. Father Corby stood on a large rock in front of the brigade. Addressing the men, he explained what he was about to do, saying that each one could receive the benefit of the absolution by making a sincere Act of Contrition and firmly resolving to embrace the first opportunity of confessing his sins, urging them to do their duty, and reminding them of the high and sacred nature of their trust as soldiers and the noble object for which they fought. As he*

> *closed his address, every man, Catholic and non-Catholic, fell on his knees with his head bowed down. Then stretching his right hand toward the brigade, Father Corby pronounced the words of the absolution:*
>
> *Dominus noster Jesus Christus vos absolvat, et ego, auctoritate ipsius, vos absolvo ab omni vinculo, excommunicationis interdicti, in quantum possum et vos indigetis deinde ego absolvo vos, a pecatis vestris, in nomni Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti, Amen*
>
> *May our Lord Jesus Christ absolve you; and by His authority I absolve you from every bond of excommunication or interdict, so far as I am able and you have need. Moreover, I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

All of this took place within ear shot of the Peach Orchard and Little Round Top with cannon and musket fire all around them. Father Corby did what he could to prepare the men under his care for battle that day and for what would face them in the next world. There exists now a statue of Father Corby perched upon the very rock where he gave this absolution in the Gettysburg National Battlefield.

To quote again from Father Corby's book;

> *I do not think there was a man in the brigade who did not offer up a heart-felt prayer. For some, it was their last; they knelt there in their grave clothes. In less than half an hour many of them were numbered with the dead of July 2nd.*

As I write these words, thousands of people are heading toward Gettysburg, many of them traveling on the same roads that those soldiers did 161 years ago. They go to reenact one of the bloodiest days in American history. They do this to honor those who fought on both sides for what they thought was right. Those who wore blue and those who wore gray were fighting for their version of America, for their rights and the rights of others. Some believe the war was inevitable and sooner or later it would happen. I cannot help but think of the priest from Notre Dame who stood on that rock and gave what comfort he could.

Father Corby has been quoted as saying that he meant this absolution not only for those assembled before him but for all of those fighting on that day that they fight the good honorable fight.

Father Corby died in 1897 after serving as President of Notre Dame University. The men he served with loved him very deeply and always invited him to speak at reunions and other gathers that he was able to attend.

We must never forget our history and we must never forget those who gave so much for America.

Rev. Peter Preble, Camp Commander
Col. Robert Gould Shaw Camp #54

From The Department Patriotic Instructor

This is my first article as Department Patriotic Instructor. My name is George Maple, PDC from Willie Grout Camp #25.

I would like to make a suggestion for patriotic instruction for the public and possibly get your name out there. Recently, our camp co-hosted a cemetery walk. This allowed us to let people know about some of the Civil War veterans. As you know, one of our tenets is to perpetuate the memory of the boys in blue. It was well received by those who attended. You don't necessarily need to know their biography, just letting them know the death date, enlistment and mustered out dates, and any battles they were involved in. Research any monument in the cemetery dedicated to the boys in blue. You may be surprised at what you may learn.

You can contact me by email at gmaplejr@gmail.com

In Fraternity, Charity and Loyalty,

George Maple, PDC, Department Patriotic Instructor

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